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13 March 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Dulles  
SUBJECT: Cuban Operation - July/September 1960

1. Although I believe that I have found enough material to answer the questions which you passed to me regarding the Cuban operation, I have not been able to locate any briefing paper for the 18 September briefing nor have I had a chance to re-examine the I.G. Survey and the DD/P answer to it. The latter documents are available through Kirkpatrick's office in the new building or special request. I would have liked to examine the March 17 policy paper (i.e., the document approved by the President setting forth the original basic plan) but it was not essential that I do so, so I did not press for this material. You, of course, can get it if you feel that it would be useful to you.
2. I am attaching some documents which I think might be useful, namely, papers having to do with the 23 July briefing; a copy of the Special Group minutes dealing with Cuba which I have marked with paper clips to indicate the more significant meetings prior to 18 September 1960; and a chronology of the operation which was prepared for General Taylor's committee in April 1961. I would appreciate it if you could return these three documents to me (1412 K Building) when they have served your purposes.
3. It is quite clear that prior to early November, the original 17 March concept of the operation prevailed. From the point of view of paramilitary operations, this involved training a cadre of trainers who in turn were to train approximately 500 Cubans for use as members of small teams for penetration of the Island.

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In this connection, I suggest you read the 3 November 1960 Special Group meetings and that you read pages 6 and 7 of the document entitled "Briefing Paper on Cuba" which is one of those in the 23 July briefing set.

4. You will remember that although no change in concept was adopted until November there had been discussion during the summer regarding the difficulty of organising an internal opposition in such a way as to provide adequate strength to achieve an overthrow without some fairly potent force being introduced from the outside. This thinking was the genesis of the ultimate change in concept. I believe that if you want to get it, the DD/P answer to the I. G. Survey contains some description of the reasons why these uncertainties developed through the summer 1960. A variant of the original 17 March plan, also discussed in the summer of 1960, was the possibility of taking over the Isle of Pines with the thought that it could provide a base from which to operate and on which to introduce the FRD, or perhaps more appropriately, a dissident government. You will remember that this plan ultimately had to be abandoned because of the fairly strong defenses which were introduced and the fact that the defensive terrain made it possible for a relatively small force to stand off a bigger force particularly at the end where the prison was located. Moreover, it was quite clear that the scale of attack necessary to achieve this goal was far beyond anything contemplated during the summer of 1960 or indeed was contemplated at a much later date.

5. As of 18 September 1960, the following paragraphs express, I believe, an accurate statement of the operation:

a. Plan. In addition to what is mentioned above, the plan contemplated the development, support and guidance of opposition groups in Pinar del Rio, the Escambray, and Oriente. No air drop had yet been attempted (the first supply mission was on the night of 28/29 September). A few minor maritime operations had been run which are described below.

b. Training. The main training camp in Guatemala (for ground forces) was ready to receive up to 500 trainees, of which the first contingent of 200 men was in place. In addition, in a special area in Guatemala 26 communicators were receiving their final training.

The training camp in the [redacted] had completed training 29 Cubans for the training cadre in Guatemala and had been placed on a standby basis.

c. Air Operations. The air strip and camp at Retalhuleu, Guatemala were complete, training was underway and overflights were being planned. Cuban crews and sterile aircraft were on hand as were substantial amounts of arms and ammunition and other materiel for air drop inside Cuba. Leaflets had also been prepared for air drop. I am not certain exactly when the first B-26 aircraft arrived at this base, but I am substantially sure it was well after 18 September.

d. Maritime Operations. At this time three covert runs had been effected infiltrating a small amount of arms and other materiel plus two agents. In addition, 16 other infiltrations had been accomplished involving a single individual each time through the use of a special compartment in a Cuban ship. At that time, of course, diplomatic relations were still in effect in Cuba and the need for black operations for the movement of personnel was usually not essential.

e. Internal Resistance. The estimate at this time was that 1500-2000 persons being the total of the five main Anti-Castro groups constituted the internal resistance. [redacted]

[redacted] The internal resistance had by this time perpetrated a great many relatively minor acts of sabotage.

6. A final point not mentioned above is that by September it was clear that the original estimate of having a 500 man cadre ready for use in small teams by 1 November had slipped. I cannot remember definitely what date was estimated by the latter part of September, but I am sure that it was late November or even the end of December. On the other hand, we did hope at that time to follow the 17 March plan to the extent of infiltrating teams that were ready with the idea of continuing the team infiltrations over a period of approximately two months. This was changed, of course,

In November when it was agreed that some form of larger unit influence would probably be necessary to touch off the required internal support.

7. Please let me know if you need anything further.

C. TRACY BARNES

ATTACHMENTS:

1. 23 July Briefing papers
2. Special Group Meetings - Cuba
3. Chronology